



The Picts

Apparently the Western Isles of Scotland were inhabited from a very early date, long before recorded history. Our earliest evidence of settlement in the Islands is in the form of ancient monuments, or 'Books of Stone', such as the Standing Stones of Callanish on the west coast of Lewis, etc., which the experts tell us go back for thousands of years.

Written history informs us about several waves of early settlers such as the 'Picts' or 'Cruithnich' in Gaelic. Some early writers maintain that the 'brochs' or 'duns' which may be seen here and there throughout the Islands, were built by the Picts as defensive structures, and that they date from 400 B.C. to 200 A.D. In truth however, very little is known about the Picts or their language.

It is said, that at one time the Picts occupied the greater part of Scotland, North of the Firth of Forth. It is said they originated from central Europe and that they may be a branch of the Celtic race that also came to Scotland from central Europe.

There are several brochs in the Parish of Lochs, Isle of Lewis, as well as other places on the Island. Prominent among the brochs in Lochs is the dun in the village of Cromore, known as 'Dun Ban'. It is situated on a small Island in the brackish loch within the bounds of Cromore. Apparently at one time this dun was an impressive three-storey building, but now it is only a ruin.

An entry in the records of the Royal Commission on ancient monuments in Scotland states that:

The Cromore Broch is oval in plan with axis of 52ft and 44½ft, and the walls varied from 7ft to 10ft 9inches in thickness. It is connected to the shore of the loch by a causeway, which is still visible under water. The walls rose to a great height. A two foot wide gallery in the southern wall had a stair of 17 steps leading to a third gallery and underneath them a similar stair leading down to a gallery but with no exit.

Unfortunately there is no evidence of those stairs and not a lot of the walls are left now. Nevertheless the original size of the building indicates that there were quite a lot of people in the area when it was built.

Dun Bharcin is another dun not far from Cromore. It is situated on a small Island in the sea loch of Loch Erisort, opposite Cromore but nearer Crossbost village on the north shores of Loch Erisort. There is also a third dun in the Parish of Lochs, on a fresh water loch, called 'Loch an Duna' not far from Ranish.

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